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Red Riding Hood for All Ages: A Fairy-Tale Icon in Cross-Cultural Contexts (review)

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and the Women Who Created Her (2005); and *Sisters, Schoolgirls, and Sleuths: Girls' Series Books in America* (2009) by Carolyn Carpan. These books offer much new information and analysis about this overlooked area of scholarship and the many mysteries that surround it. Seems like it might be time re-open the case.

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Beckett, Sandra L. *Red Riding Hood for All Ages: A Fairy-Tale Icon in Cross-Cultural Contexts.* Wayne State UP, 2008.

Red Riding Hood for All Ages is the follow-up to Sandra Beckett's earlier study of the classic folktale, *Recycling Red Riding Hood* (Routledge, 2002). In the first book, Beckett examined twentieth-century contemporary retellings produced specifically for children from countries across the globe; in this volume, she expands her attention to encompass contemporary versions of the tale produced internationally for "all ages," or, in other words, versions that seem to be written for, or to appeal to, both adults and children. In her justification for this volume, Beckett notes that the original Perrault tale was itself a crossover text, able to be appreciated both by very young children for the simplicity of the story, and by adults for the ironic commentary in both the narrative and the concluding moral. For Beckett, however, "crossover" means not only the crossing of generations, but of continents and cultures, as well. She includes in both this and her previous study texts from dozens of countries, many never translated into English and therefore little known on an international scale. Her broad scope is intended, she says, to demonstrate that rewriting the classic European story of Little Red Riding Hood "is a widespread international phenomenon" (8). This broad scope is the most valuable, though not the only, aspect of her study that makes it a worthwhile addition to a fairytale scholar's library.

In her introduction—which is perhaps the most informative part of the book for a general understanding of contemporary retellings of this and other fairy tales—Beckett summarizes the history of the generational crossover appeal of the traditional story, beginning with the classic story

as told by Perrault and later by the Grimms in "Little Red Cap," noting that for Perrault, "children" seemed to mean young people in their late teens, and that the Grimms originally intended their collection to appeal to "all Germans, both young and old alike," rather than simply children. Beckett then considers the inherent intertextuality of the tale, an element that she points out is the essential basis of its crossover appeal, since it allows authors and illustrators to present very adult themes (sexuality, violence, and death) in terms simple enough for young children to understand. Beckett argues that the "intertextual play with this favorite childhood story can be recognized by young readers, while at the same time evoking a nostalgic pleasure in adults, explains much of the tale's appeal with crossover authors" (3).

Beckett observes that the same characteristics that she noted in her earlier study about contemporary "reversions," as she terms them, of the story for children also can be seen in those versions that have been produced for more mature audiences. Retellings for any age group "may be playful and witty [to varying degrees], intent upon subverting or even perverting the traditional tale. Such retellings deliberately demythologize or demystify the hypotext" (5). Modern retellings broaden the themes of the classic story to encompass "important psychological and metaphysical issues, such as solitude, fear, freedom, love, compassion, and death" (5), and postmodernism continues to be a strong influence on retellings, further facilitating the crossover appeal of the story. Inventive wordplay, intertextual allusions, sophisticated narrative techniques, and "hybridization of genres" are commonly found in all modern versions (6).

Visual interpretation of the story is another element in the crossover appeal of a text, with illustrations being produced today that are multilayered and complex. One of the most useful aspects of *Recycling Red Riding Hood* (2002) was its inclusion of illustrations from around the world, and *Red Riding Hood for All Ages* continues this approach, considering fifty illustrations during the course of its five chapters, both black and white and color plates, from a spectrum of illustrators from thirteen different countries. These discussions, such as how both Sarah Moon's haunting black and white photographs for Perrault's text and Isabelle Forestier's illustrations for *Un petit chaperon rouge* by Claude Clement visually transfer the classic story from a simple encounter with a wolf to a story about child molestation and pedophilia, are insightful deconstructions of these visual texts. That Beckett is discussing retellings that have by and large fallen outside the margins of most scholarly examinations of the tale because they are problematic in terms of audience adds to the value of this and other sections of this study.

The approach of the book is to group the retellings according to a few broad themes. The first chapter considers stories and illustrations that continue the tradition of the tale as a cautionary one, as Perrault and later the Grimms intended it. Beckett begins this chapter by examining Angela Carter's 1977 translation of Perrault's stories, comparing Carter's choice of words with the original French text. Carter's translation maintains the ironic tone and double entendre, she concludes, but yet is not as explicit. Perrault's witty moral appended to the end of "Le petit chaperon rouge" leaves no doubt regarding not only what kind of girl the protagonist was intended to represent but also what sort of wolves she should be wary of: those that would follow young girls not only into their homes, but their *ruelles,* a term historically referring to the "free space between a bed and the wall," and, during the reigns of Louis XIII and Louis XIV, specifically meaning the "bedrooms or alcoves of the high society women who hosted the famous salons of the period" (13).

The next chapter looks at the retellings that focus on the story as a sexual initiation or coming-of-age story. Beckett takes as her starting point here the role of the grandmother in Little Red Riding Hood's progress toward sexual awareness as reflective of the real roles of grandmothers and granddaughters in many cultures. She goes on to examine the motifs of pregnancy and childbirth employed by illustrators James Marshall, Beni Montressor, and Akane Kito, and then moves to considering how several retellers play with the concept of the color red, as, for example, "Riding the Red" by Jamaican-born Canadian author Nato Hopkinson. In an oral version often linked to the classic story, "The Grandmother's Tale," published by French folklorist Paul Delarue in 1951, the young heroine is perfectly capable of saving herself from the predatory wolf, and Beckett considers a number of modern versions from several different countries that take this approach as well. The chapter ends by looking at several versions that turn the story into a romance, such as *Mon Loup* by Anne Bertier and the Red Riding Hood stories of Tomi Ungerer. Beckett also notes that in her role as romantic heroine, Little Red Riding Hood is particularly popular in the Japanese manga genre of *shoujo* and provides a few examples.

Next are those versions that focus on the wolf, since "without the wolf, there would be no story about Little Red Riding Hood" (87). Chapter 3, "The Wolf's Story," looks at contemporary versions that explore his role as a predator, both sexual and otherwise; as a victim; and as a lover. Chapter 4, "The Wolf Within," takes this character a step further, looking at adult retellings that use the role of the wolf to explore internal fears and concerns within Little Red herself or within the other human characters. Included

here are Dutch author Paul Biegel's psychoanalytical *Wie je droomt ben je zelf* (*You Are Who You Dream About*) and the difficult short story by Brazilian author João Guimarães Rosa titled "Green Ribbon in Her Hair," which despite its title does retain a number of Little Red Riding Hood motifs. Both of these texts receive lengthy treatments in this chapter.

Chapter 5, "Running with Wolves," explores contemporary versions in which Little Red Riding Hood joins her wolf, tames her wolf, or even becomes the wolf, either literally or figuratively. A good part of this chapter is devoted to Clarissa Estes' nonfiction *Women Who Run with Wolves* and to Pierette Fleutiaux's feminist "Petit Pantalon Rouge, Barbe-Bleue et Notules," which combines the two stories of Little Red Riding Hood and Bluebeard to create a story in which the heroine tames both wolves and Bluebeard himself (Beckett includes this tale in its entirety at the end of the chapter, in addition to her analysis).

With the wealth of fairytale retellings that exist today, it is perhaps surprising that very few full-length studies devoted to retellings of a single tale type have been produced, and even more surprising that of these, a full five are devoted to Little Red Riding Hood: Alan Dundes's *Little Red Riding Hood: A Casebook* (U of Wisconsin P, 1989), Jack Zipes's *Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood* (Routledge, 1993, second edition), Catherine Orenstein's *Little Red Riding Hood Uncloaked* (Basic Books, 2002), and the two by Beckett. Each of these scholarly studies sheds light in various ways on how and why storytellers in the twentieth century have been fascinated by this centuries-old story. Sandra Beckett's distinctive contribution to this body of knowledge is in the breadth and scope of her discussions in terms of international treatments of the tale as well as in terms of the crossing of boundaries of audience and genre. While the treatment of the individual tales is a bit uneven, varying from a number of pages to merely a few paragraphs, *Red Riding Hood for all Ages* is illuminating, gracefully written, and a must for scholars interested in the perennial popularity of this, and other, fairy tales.

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